

1

2

3

-----

4 IN THE MATTER OF THE REGIONAL  
5 FARM BILL NUTRITION FORUM,  
6 CHEYENNE LISTENING SESSION

6

-----

7

8

9

10 TRANSCRIPT OF FORUM PROCEEDINGS  
11 Friday, September 30, 2005

11

12

13

14

15 PURSUANT TO NOTICE duly given to all parties in  
16 interest, this matter came on for hearing on the 30th day  
17 of September, 2005, at the hour of 10:05 a.m. at the Little  
18 America Hotel, 2800 West Lincolnway, Cheyenne, Wyoming,  
19 before the USDA-FNS Deputy Under Secretary Kate Coler,  
20 Mountain Plains Regional Administrator Darlene Barnes, and  
21 Deputy Administrator of the Food Stamp Program, Clarence  
22 Carter.

23

24

25

1

I N D E X

2

	Cheyenne 093005 farm bill.txt	
3	Statements:	Page
4		
5	Deputy Under Secretary Coler	3
6	Ms. Laura Lewis - Senator Thomas' Office	7
7	Mr. Robert O'Connor - Weld Food Bank	9
8	Ms. Diane Delozier - Wyoming Food Bank	13
9	Ms. Cheryl McVay - Wyoming AARP	17
10	Ms. Suzanne Pelican - UW Society for Nutritional Education	23
11	Ms. Katie Mordhorst - Department of Education	26
12	Mr. Terry Williams - Wyoming Department of Family Services	31
13		
14	Ms. Tori Ford - Metro Caring	34
15	Ms. Tina Podolak - Colorado Anti-Hunger Network	36
16	Ms. Jan Hackett - Colorado State Forest Service	40
17		
18	Ms. Christy Berggren - Colorado State Forest Service	42
19	Mr. Ray Ramos - Colorado tree farmer	43
20	Mr. Rom Reedy - Peak Wellness Center	45
21	Mr. Scott Zimmerman - Rocky Mountain Farmers Union	
22		
23	Ms. Rhonda Ferrell - Wyoming Department of Family Services	50
24	Deputy Under Secretary Coler	52
25		

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 (Hearing proceedings commenced

3 10:05 a.m., September 30, 2005.)

4 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: I just

5 wanted to welcome you all here today. I'm Darlene Barnes,

6 the regional administrator for the Mountain Plains Region

7 in Denver, Colorado, which Wyoming is one of the wonderful

Page 2

8 states which I have the responsibility of working with. We  
9 appreciate you coming to the forum today.

10 And we have with us from Washington, D.C. Deputy  
11 Under Secretary Kate Coler and also the deputy  
12 administrator for the Food Stamp Program from the Food and  
13 Nutrition Service, Clarence Carter, and we're real glad  
14 they could come out here and be part of this forum and  
15 listen to your comments.

16 I want to first introduce Kate Coler. She was  
17 appointed the deputy under secretary in 2003, and prior to  
18 that she actually had the job that Clarence Carter now has  
19 as deputy administrator for the Food Stamp Program. For  
20 those of you who don't know her, she does have a real  
21 passion for all of the food and nutrition assistance  
22 programs, but I think a special fondness for food stamps,  
23 so with that I introduce Kate Coler.

24 (Applause.)

25 DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY COLER: Thank you

4

1 very much, and thank you all for being here today. We  
2 are -- it's hard for me to believe that we're already  
3 preparing for the 2007 Farm Bill, but it is coming up very  
4 quickly, and Congress is going to be starting to discuss  
5 the issues, and so Secretary Johanns has committed to  
6 holding forums across the country on a variety of topics  
7 that are going to be reauthorized in the next Farm Bill.

8 Our plan is to have a forum in every state. And  
9 we're having about ten of them with a special focus on the  
10 nutrition title, which reauthorizes a number of programs,  
11 the Food Stamp Program, the Commodity Supplemental Feeding

12 Program, the feeding program on Indian Reservations, the  
13 Senior Farmers Market Program, as well as the Nutrition  
14 Assistance Program in Puerto Rico, which I don't anticipate  
15 any comments here today, but they are welcome.

16 We're also open to comments on any titles of the  
17 Farm Bill. If we have other representatives from other  
18 interests that would like to say something, we do have an  
19 official transcriber, and all of the comments today will be  
20 fed into the complete package of transcriptions and policy  
21 discussions that we'll be reviewing at USDA as we prepare  
22 our proposals for the next Farm Bill.

23 So your input today is very important. I think  
24 we had a lot of success in the 2002 Farm Bill, specifically  
25 with the nutrition programs. The Food Stamp Program, I

5

1 think we saw a lot of red tape diminished. I think we are  
2 certainly trying to make the program and all of our  
3 nutrition programs easier for people to access. We are  
4 committed to making sure that everyone who is eligible for  
5 our programs can access those programs with dignity and  
6 respect, and we want to build upon the success.

7 The invitation letter to you specifically  
8 outlined some questions that we would like to hear some  
9 input on. It's more to provoke thought. We're certainly  
10 hear to listen to all comments, but we do want to see and  
11 hear your views on what's working about the program, what  
12 are our common goals and our strategy to make these  
13 programs better. Where do you see weaknesses that you  
14 think we need to address to improve these programs? So we  
15 want your input on all sorts of things.

16 As many of you know, the Food Stamp Program  
Page 4

17 specifically has crossed some major milestones in the last  
18 few years. We are at the lowest error rate in the  
19 program's history, the lowest rate of fraud. We have  
20 completely eliminated paper coupons. We destroyed the  
21 federal inventory of them. There are still some in  
22 circulation that retailers must accept, but we are now 100  
23 percent electronic benefits transfer.

24 One thing I'm interested in this program is how  
25 do we remove some of the stigma, because it really is an

6

1 important benefit for people, and renaming the program is  
2 something that we're discussing. It does take an act of  
3 Congress, but we've had a Federal Register notice where  
4 we've sought some public input on that, so if you have any  
5 thoughts on potential new names, we're open to those as  
6 well.

7 And just overall we want to see our nutrition  
8 programs not only combat hunger, because that is their  
9 primary goal, but we also want to see how can we utilize  
10 these programs to move Americans to a healthier lifestyle.

11 I think over the years we've really learned that  
12 diet and physical activity play so much in a person's  
13 health and well-being, and I think our nutrition programs  
14 have an overarching reach into the American public. We  
15 touch the lives of one in five Americans every year through  
16 our nutrition programs, so how can we utilize these  
17 programs not only to combat hunger but also to fight the  
18 increasing epidemic of obesity in this country?

19 So we're going to listen. That's it for our  
20 talking today. We really do want your input. We really --

21 we're going to, as I said, submit all of your comments into  
22 the formal official proceedings of the Farm Bill forums  
23 across the country to continue to evaluate and debate and  
24 see how we can improve these programs.

25 I do want to recognize a few people that came

7

1 here today to also welcome you. We have from  
2 Representative Barbara Cubin's office Katie Legerski.

3 (Applause.)

4 DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY COLER: From Senator  
5 Mike Enzi's office we have Diane Kirkbride.

6 (Applause.)

7 DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY COLER: And I think  
8 we will kick it off with Laura Lewis. She brought a letter  
9 from Senator Craig Thomas to welcome us all. So if she  
10 will be our first speaker, we will ask her to come up to  
11 the podium.

12 MS. LEWIS: This letter is addressed to  
13 Darlene Barnes --

14 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Excuse me,  
15 we need to turn that on.

16 MS. LEWIS: This letter is addressed to  
17 Darlene Barnes. "Good morning, Darlene. Thank you for  
18 hosting this forum in Cheyenne to listen to concerns and  
19 suggestions from Wyoming citizens about the USDA nutrition  
20 programs. Because the current Farm Bill will expire in  
21 2007, Congress is likely to reauthorize the program prior  
22 to that time.

23 "As a member of the Senate Committee on  
24 Agriculture, I am particularly interested in hearing about  
25 what has worked and how we can improve existing programs.

1 It is so important the USDA and Congress receive feedback  
2 from those who utilize and are affected by these programs.  
3 The food and nutrition services included in the current  
4 Farm Bill are important to many folks in Wyoming. To be  
5 most effective and responsible to these taxpayers, we must  
6 ensure the goals of these services are being met, that they  
7 are operating efficiently and effectively.

8 "Public input is crucial to that effort, and  
9 Agricultural Secretary Johanns has made these forums a top  
10 priority. I commend the Secretary for his outreach and  
11 know the people of Wyoming can provide you invaluable  
12 insight. I especially appreciate the attention USDA has  
13 shown to the people of Wyoming. This is the second Farm  
14 Bill listening session held in Wyoming in the past two  
15 months. It is good to know the concerns of Wyoming  
16 citizens are being solicited.

17 "Again, thank you for coming to our state, and I  
18 look forward to working with you and the people of Wyoming  
19 during consideration of the 2007 Farm Bill.

20 "Best regards, Senator Craig Thomas."

21 (Applause.)

22 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Can you  
23 hear me if I just talk from this level right now while we  
24 work out the mikes? We have a list of speakers and I know  
25 that you have your numbers, and the number will flash up on

1 the board, and so when you see your number, please come up  
2 and address who you are and where you're from, and we're

3 allowing basically five minutes for your comments, and what  
4 I don't know is are there people holding cards for timing?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No. We're timing  
6 for five minutes and we'll just say.

7 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: If you  
8 start to go over five minutes, you'll see a hand raised in  
9 the front here by one of these ladies. And if you have  
10 written comments, please leave them with the transcriber on  
11 this table right here.

12 Okay. And with that, so our first speaker is Bob  
13 O'Connor, I believe, from the Weld Food Bank. I just  
14 happen to know that.

15 DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY COLER: Before you  
16 speak, I think I did not mention the TEFAP program, which  
17 is certainly reauthorized as well.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You'll have to use  
19 the hand-held mike.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Good morning and thank you  
21 for inviting me here today. My name is Robert O'Connor,  
22 and I'm the deputy direct -- excuse me, the director of the  
23 Weld Food Bank operations, and I'm here today to represent  
24 the organization of the director who was just recently  
25 called by American Second Harvest to go assist in Alabama,

10

1 so she asked me to come here today and to address you all.

2 I'm here today to talk to you about a program  
3 that we currently have in Weld County that's called the  
4 Commodity Supplemental Food Program. I'd like to describe  
5 a little about how it works, some of the people we serve  
6 and then offer some suggestions for enhancement to the  
7 program.



8                   Commodity Supplemental Food Program serves women,  
9 mothers, infants, children and seniors. This includes  
10 pregnant women, postpartum and breast-feeding women up to  
11 one year after the baby is born, children up to 6 years of  
12 age and seniors 60 and over.

13                   In the month of August 2005, the Weld Food Banks'  
14 CSF Feed Program distributed to 5,387 participants, and of  
15 that number, 212 were infants 0 to 3 months, 560 were  
16 infants 4 to 12 months, 2,032 were children 1 to 6 years of  
17 age, 97 were nursing and pregnant women, 655 were  
18 postpartum women, and 1,831 were seniors. The youngest  
19 participant served in the month of August was one day old  
20 while the oldest was 97 years old. The average age of the  
21 senior on this program in Weld County is 72 years old.

22                   Commodity Supplemental Food Program accomplishes  
23 more than just meeting a food need. It's a monthly food  
24 package that's designed to meet the recipient's nutritional  
25 requirements. For example, a pregnant woman can receive a

11

1 nutritious monthly food package throughout her pregnancy,  
2 and that certainly will assist with the development of the  
3 baby. An infant will receive formula from one year --  
4 excuse me, from birth to one year, and at four months of  
5 age they will also receive infant cereal and juice as well,  
6 and the seniors also get a nutritionally designed package  
7 which targets that.

8                   Every other month we travel to New Raymer and  
9 Grover, which is in northeastern Colorado right off the  
10 Wyoming border, and we serve approximately 40 seniors. The  
11 trip is extremely long, but there are great rewards and

12 benefits. These seniors look forward to our distribution,  
13 and they are really appreciative of the food we give them  
14 because the need there is immense.

15 We just recently started a home delivery program  
16 for homebound seniors, and our community has once again  
17 stepped up by supplying volunteers to deliver the food  
18 packages and by spending some valuable time with these  
19 homebound seniors.

20 CSFP is a well-designed program that is  
21 accomplishing exactly what it is intended to do. I can  
22 tell you this by not quoting statistical numbers, but by  
23 quoting to you telling you about seven years of personal  
24 observation watching this program meet the needs of our  
25 most vulnerable citizens. In such an area, rural area such

12

1 as Weld County, having a reliable and valuable food source  
2 must not be underestimated.

3 To greater enhance the Commodity Supplemental  
4 Food Program, we would like to recommend that USDA move  
5 forward with implementing the program in the five states  
6 that have received authorization and have already submitted  
7 the plans for startup. Then move forward with the  
8 implementation in the rest of the states that have been  
9 given the authority to have this program.

10 Also I would like to recommend that we recognize  
11 our changing demographics and start focusing on service on  
12 the elderly, which is an ever-increasing population. I  
13 would recommend there be a coordinated effort to do  
14 outreach to homebound seniors. As I indicated, we just  
15 started that program and were shocked at the great need for  
16 this type of a service.

17           Also giving each state the authority to set its  
18 own priorities would be a major enhancement to the program.  
19 Since each state has an intimate knowledge of its own  
20 demographics, needs, services and food supply, it would be  
21 a major plus for each state.

22           Lastly, I would strongly recommend that CSFP not  
23 be cut in any way. This would be devastating to the  
24 individuals who so desperately need this food supply, as  
25 well as the communities who serve them.

13

1                           (Applause.)

2                   REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Our second  
3 person who is up for comment -- are our numbers not  
4 working?

5                   MS. DELOZIER: I was waiting for the  
6 number.

7                   UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think our  
8 equipment malfunction earlier might have upset the system.

9                   REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Yeah, we  
10 had a little accident.

11                  UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sorry. Go ahead.

12                  MS. DELOZIER: My name is Diane Delozier,  
13 and I am the director of the Wyoming Food Bank of the  
14 Rockies in Mills, Wyoming. We are a nonprofit private  
15 organization whose mission is to fight hunger and feed hope  
16 across the state. We are a branch of the Food Bank of the  
17 Rockies in Denver. And they have been serving the state of  
18 Wyoming for about 20 years, but last year we opened a  
19 warehouse in Mills to better serve our state.

20                  At the end of this last fiscal year, which ended

21 June 2005 or June 30th, we had distributed over 2 million  
22 pounds of food across the state.

23 We think of food insecurity and how we address  
24 the problem as a puzzle. There are many pieces that must  
25 fit together to help complete the picture of food

14

1 assistance. All the pieces are important. One piece, we  
2 consider ourselves, Wyoming Food Bank of the Rockies,  
3 another of the Department of Family Services, the Food  
4 Stamp Program, WIC, CSFP and the other programs that are  
5 represented here plus the 150 agencies that we work with  
6 across the state that help work with adults and children  
7 and helping them stay nourished.

8 We are under contract with the Department of  
9 Family Services here in Wyoming to administer the Emergency  
10 Food Assistance Program, the TEFAP program. We entered  
11 into this contract with them last year. We feel fortunate  
12 to administer the program as it complements what we do and  
13 provides additional food sources for those in need.

14 DFS has a strong staff and our working  
15 relationship with them has been very good. We have worked  
16 very hard to get the program headed in the right direction,  
17 and I believe we have done a great deal to bring consistent  
18 delivery of product across the state.

19 I am, however, often troubled by the pleas from  
20 our distribution sites for more food. Our state is  
21 populated by many hard-working folks that do not earn  
22 enough to provide a living to sustain their basic needs.  
23 According to the TEFAP program guidelines, each state's  
24 share of commodities and funds is based on 60 percent of  
25 the number of persons in households within the state having

1 incomes below the poverty level and 40 percent on the  
2 number of unemployed persons within the state.

3           Wyoming, fortunate as we are to have an  
4 unemployment rate (sic), unfortunately that has a very  
5 negative effect on what we receive for TEFAP. It doesn't  
6 take into consideration those people working but not  
7 earning enough to make ends meet, the working poor.

8           I did some rough estimating before coming here  
9 and figured that our agencies across the state are serving  
10 about 10,000 people each month, adults and children. Based  
11 on the government entitlement we received last year of just  
12 \$160,000, that averages out to about \$16 per person per  
13 year.

14           Fortunately we take advantage of the bonus  
15 products that are offered, and we did receive an additional  
16 417,000 or so dollars extra in bonus products, which  
17 brought that entitlement up to \$63. But for a yearly  
18 allotment, \$63 per person is not very much.

19           The entitlement to serve our state, even a  
20 sparsely populated one, is minimal and it makes ordering a  
21 real challenge. With only about \$40,000 to spend each  
22 quarter and having to order by the truckload, I'm forced to  
23 find the cheapest loads I can. I look for those that are  
24 about 10,000 apiece so that I can get four items, but it  
25 does limit my choices, and I can't -- I don't have the

1 ability to provide a balance in all the food groups. We  
2 have a lot of carbs that go out.

3           The variety is limited, and getting protein for  
4 my sites, it's absolutely impossible. I can't do it with  
5 the entitlement. If a bonus product comes up, I'm able to.  
6 Last year we had two, walnuts and salmon, and that was all  
7 for the year. Peanut butter is out of the question. Beef  
8 stew, which people are always asking me about, could we get  
9 some more of that, I can't afford it. If I buy a truckload  
10 of those, I've kind of -- it's one item. It takes all my  
11 allotment for one quarter of ordering.

12           They ask about cheese. They still want cheese  
13 and butter from the years when it was plentiful, but that  
14 won't happen either. It would wipe out a full quarter of  
15 allotment or more.

16           It's hard to explain to the recipients of the  
17 commodities why items such as butter, cheese, peanut butter  
18 and canned meats are not available, especially when our  
19 neighbor states are getting them. I was in Pine Bluffs  
20 yesterday doing a site visit, visiting with the director  
21 there, and she has many recipients there that have friends  
22 and neighbors in Nebraska, and so the people that are  
23 receiving commodities in Pine Bluffs wonder why we're not  
24 getting what they are getting over there.

25           I've had a site director accused of holding back

17

1 or discriminating against a person, saying, "You're not  
2 giving us everything you've got. I know there's more back  
3 there," but there isn't. We just don't have it. And so  
4 that fairness issue comes up a lot for my site directors.

5           The TEFAP program is vital and necessary, I know  
6 that, and without it, I don't know what we would do. Even  
7 with the little amount that we receive, I know it's a

8 godsend to everyone that we serve.

9 I'm new to the program. I don't have a clear  
10 handle on policy and how this all works, and what, you  
11 know, to offer any suggestions. I just come here as a  
12 voice for the people that we've been serving for this past  
13 year to let you know that they are holding out hope that  
14 they will receive -- we'll receive some more money so that  
15 we can get them some additional products. Thank you for  
16 allowing me to speak today.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. McVAY: Good morning. My name is  
19 Cheryl McVay, and I'm with the executive council with  
20 Wyoming AARP, and we're also new to this program, and thank  
21 you for having us today.

22 Wyoming AARP appreciates the opportunity to share  
23 our policy recommendations today. The nutrition programs  
24 that the USDA serves are very important to the elderly, to  
25 their households and to the children that they take care of

18

1 as well.

2 I think a key to the policy recommendations we'll  
3 talk about today is that AARP acknowledges as a high  
4 priority and supports the critical link between nutrition  
5 and health in ensuring that vulnerable, low-income, older  
6 individuals have access to nutritious food.

7 There's three points we wanted to talk about  
8 today, food stamps, the commodities, and then grand-  
9 parenting. One of the points within the Food Stamp  
10 Program, I'll be preaching to the choir here, is that from  
11 your own information online, we find that three out of five

12 eligible -- people eligible for Wyoming food stamps are not  
13 receiving them. And I also found online yesterday an  
14 article that says 62 percent of those people in large  
15 communities, large towns, are not finding the services --  
16 they are getting the services and the rest of the  
17 population is not finding the services, so we're in the  
18 ballpark.

19 I choose to show our recommendations as barriers.  
20 I think what we want to do is make a recommendation to  
21 eliminate some of the barriers so that the low-income  
22 elderly can participate in the program.

23 One of the things that is important to the  
24 low-income elderly is limited funds, of course. That's  
25 true with anyone. And one of the issues that the elderly

19

1 face as well as anybody, we do right now, is the Wyoming  
2 Tribune-Eagle this morning saying that local heating bills  
3 are going up not just this year, but next year. And also I  
4 see a New York Times article today that says the very same  
5 thing, that on the average, over a thousand dollars a year  
6 you'll have to pay more in your utility bills.

7 So the elderly, the low income have to make  
8 decisions. In AARP, we talk about it as being decisions  
9 between pharmacy, food and fuel. It's the four Fs. That's  
10 my joke. Nobody got it.

11 (Laughter.)

12 MS. McVAY: So the recommendations are that  
13 we see some of the barriers we'd like to eliminate. So I  
14 got some under food stamps, that AARP recommends Congress  
15 increase food stamp benefits to ensure nutritional adequacy  
16 for the most vulnerable Americans. And we define this as



17 being a component of particularly bringing benefits in line  
18 with the actual food costs. That may be what the previous  
19 speaker was addressing.

20 AARP also recommends that Congress increase the  
21 minimum monthly benefit and index it with inflation. I  
22 understand that the monthly -- the minimum benefit right  
23 now is \$10 a month, and there was a 2000 GAO report that  
24 suggested the food stamp directors suggested a \$25 minimum  
25 benefit. Still seems low to me, but we'd like for you to

20

1 consider that.

2 AARP also recommends that Congress and USDA  
3 increase the flexibility of the Food Stamp Program benefits  
4 to be used on nonEBT food establishments. For the elderly,  
5 particularly in the rural areas, finding an EBT location is  
6 difficult. I commend you for making an EBT decision in  
7 Wyoming, but it's not always in the world of an older low-  
8 income person to be able to use the service that way.

9 Also, the miles to be driven, the miles to get  
10 from one location to the next enters into the other costs,  
11 and that's the gasoline cost, to get to where the  
12 electronic benefit is.

13 AARP also recommends USDA change Food Stamp  
14 Program regulations that define what constitutes a  
15 household to make it easier for the extended families to  
16 qualify for and receive adequate benefits. Grandparents  
17 and other caregiver relatives play an increasing important  
18 role in family well-being, especially in low-income  
19 families. According to the 2000 census, approximately 2.4  
20 million grandparents are responsible for raising their

21 grandchildren. Few of these caregivers receive child  
22 support payments for their grandchildren, and the current  
23 food stamp rules make it difficult for grandparents and  
24 other caregiver relatives to obtain food stamps on behalf  
25 of children in their care. This is a very important item

21

1 for AARP.

2 AARP also recommends that Congress, USDA and the  
3 State simplify applications for food to match more closely  
4 the reading ability and language proficiency of applicants.  
5 That also played into the article I saw in the New York  
6 Times.

7 AARP also recommends Congress consider automatic  
8 food stamp eligibility for all elderly Medicaid  
9 beneficiaries not residing in institutional settings, and  
10 it's my understanding that would bring this in line with  
11 the SSI requirements as well. One of the issues is they  
12 are treated differently about the ownership of cars versus  
13 homes. Again, I don't profess to have the full knowledge.

14 AARP recommends that Congress and USDA not  
15 establish standard benefits for categories or beneficiaries  
16 in view of the potential and unnecessary harm that would  
17 result. This, as I understand it, the federal floor has a  
18 protection and that if you give states too much  
19 flexibility, that federal floor could be violated, and in  
20 order to save local money, we might do it at the expense of  
21 the low-income elderly.

22 The second area I'd like to comment on is the  
23 commodities programs. Just briefly, AARP recommends that  
24 Congress should continue to fully fund the Emergency Food  
25 Assistance Program, and it's my understanding that the 1996

1 welfare reform made a big dent in those who are eligible  
2 for the food stamps and they default into this emergency  
3 fund program.

4           And AARP also recommends that Congress should  
5 raise the income eligibility standard for seniors to treat  
6 them identical to other CSFP populations and increase  
7 funding for the -- so that all states can participate in  
8 the program. I understand only 33 states can participate  
9 at this time. Seniors are run off of 130 percent. Am I in  
10 the right program? And the children are on 185 percent  
11 poverty level. Looking for equity, parity.

12           And the third area again to address for us is  
13 grandparenting and grandchildren. Wyoming recently  
14 implemented some legislation that enhanced the legal  
15 responsibilities for grandparenting, raising grandchildren.  
16 And just to quote some of the numbers for Wyoming, some of  
17 you are from Wyoming, some aren't, we only have 500,000  
18 people in the whole state, so our numbers are small. Time  
19 is up.

20           We also recommend that the Food Stamp Program be  
21 allowed for grandparent caregivers and nonparent care-  
22 givers and that Congress study to assist grandparenting,  
23 raising grandchildren and other relative caregivers for  
24 dependent children. And thank you for the opportunity.  
25 Sorry to go over.

1           REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: That's  
2 okay. Thank you.

3  
4 MS. PELICAN: Good morning. My name is  
5 Suzanne Pelican. I'm a registered dietitian and the food  
6 and nutrition specialist with the University of Wyoming  
7 Cooperative Extension Service in the College of  
8 Agriculture's Department of Family and Consumer Sciences.  
9 But I'm speaking today on behalf of the Society for  
10 Nutrition Education, also known as SNE.

11 Our thanks to Deputy Under Secretary Coler and  
12 USDA's Food and Nutrition Service for allowing SNE the  
13 opportunity to participate in this important session.

14 SNE represents the unique professional interests  
15 of professional educators in the United States and  
16 worldwide. SNE is dedicated to promoting healthy,  
17 sustainable food choices and has the vision of healthy  
18 people and healthy communities. We encourage changes in  
19 the 2007 Farm Bill that will support these goals of health  
20 and sustainability.

21 Our testimony focuses on five areas related to  
22 USDA programs and outreach. First, the Food Stamp Program.  
23 There is a need to improve program access by allowing a  
24 community-based application process. The program needs to  
25 reflect the 2005 dietary guidelines. We recommend fruit

24

1 and vegetable incentives as part of the program. We do not  
2 support the inclusion of vitamin, mineral and other dietary  
3 supplements.

4 Second, the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition  
5 Program, it increases access to fruits and vegetables, but  
6 funding is needed to accommodate every state, all United  
7 States territories and all federally recognized Indian

8 nations. Our written testimony includes several other  
9 points that I'll leave for coverage by that document for  
10 time's sake here today.

11 Third, we need to establish consistent nutrition  
12 and health standards across programs using the 2005 dietary  
13 guidelines. These include programs such as the temporary  
14 assistance -- Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program,  
15 the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations, the  
16 Commodity Supplemental Food Program and the Nutrition  
17 Assistance Program in Puerto Rico. SNE has members there  
18 and we serve residents of Puerto Rico.

19 Fourth, our written testimony offers suggestions  
20 and encourages actions regarding eligibility rules and  
21 procedures and more effective use of technology to improve  
22 customer service, to reduce payment errors and to lower  
23 administrative costs.

24 Fifth, Farm Bill programs are really unparalleled  
25 educational and social marketing opportunities for

25

1 improving the health of Americans. For time's sake, I'm  
2 going to focus on food stamp nutrition education. This  
3 program is a vital component to changing the health  
4 behaviors of individuals with limited resources, and it is  
5 critical for the program to be adequately funded.

6 I'm going to close by sharing a story from a  
7 participant who graduated from the Food Stamp Nutrition  
8 Education Program here in Wyoming. It's called the  
9 Sensible Nutrition Program.

10 This participant used to drink six huge mugs of  
11 soda per day and consumed foods high in fat and sugar. She

12 had diabetes, high blood cholesterol and high blood  
13 pressure. She knew she was unhealthy and needed to make  
14 some changes. She read about the program in a local  
15 brochure and signed up for classes.

16 The lessons taught her to eat more nutritiously,  
17 but nutrition wasn't all that she learned. She learned  
18 about serving sizes and food safety and she rediscovered  
19 the pleasure of eating. She also became more physically  
20 active, and her positive changes had amazing results. In  
21 addition to a 50-pound weight loss, she reduced her blood  
22 pressure, lowered her blood cholesterol and eliminated the  
23 need for diabetes medication and she improved her mental  
24 attitude. She feels in control of her life.

25 Her changes not only benefitted her health, they

26

1 also helped her save money. Before classes her monthly  
2 grocery bill approached \$350. After the program she was  
3 able to stay within her 142 food stamp allocation, and she  
4 reduced her monthly medication costs to well below \$400.

5 In her own words, she said, "I learned three very  
6 important things, how to save money, how to make my food  
7 stamps last and how to eat right."

8 This participant's story is dramatic but not  
9 unique. Throughout the country the Food Stamp Nutrition  
10 Education Program is helping hundreds of thousands of  
11 participants improve their health and their lives by  
12 helping them gain the knowledge, the attitudes, the skills,  
13 the confidence and the motivation to change their  
14 behaviors.

15 SNE thanks USDA and the organizers for this  
16 opportunity for input, and we offer the resources of our

17 membership as the 2007 Farm Bill reauthorization moves  
18 forward. Thank you.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. MORDHORST: Ms. Coler, Mr. Carter,  
21 regional office staff guests and attendees, on behalf of  
22 the USDA Child Nutrition Programs of the Wyoming Department  
23 of Education, I would like to welcome you to Wyoming. I am  
24 Katie Mordhorst, nutrition program supervisor for the  
25 Department of Education. In that capacity, I oversee the

27

1 operations of the Commodity Food Distribution Program that  
2 provides products for institutions such as public schools,  
3 private schools, residential child care institutions,  
4 summer feeding programs, and summer camps throughout our  
5 state.

6 In the past three months we have been operating  
7 this program under some emergency conditions due to the  
8 fact that the only warehouse in the state capable of  
9 handling the volume of products we provide has closed its  
10 doors. While we had to scramble to get it accomplished, we  
11 were able to provide, at least on a temporary basis, a  
12 mechanism for warehousing and shipping the products to the  
13 recipient agencies participating in the Food Distribution  
14 Program.

15 USDA was helpful in providing support and  
16 assistance in this process, but the final reality for us is  
17 that the Wyoming Department of Education is now operating  
18 its own warehousing system.

19 As a preface to my suggestion, I would like to  
20 provide some detail information regarding our program as it

21 impacts the state of Wyoming:

22           One, the USDA value of commodities provided to  
23 our recipient agencies last school year was just over  
24 \$1.3 million.

25           Two, the cost to those agencies for those

28

1 products was almost \$1.2 million. This included  
2 warehousing, shipping, reprocessing charges and other  
3 miscellaneous program costs.

4           Three, the cost of program operations for the  
5 current school year include a 28 percent increase in  
6 shipping fees, a 5 percent increase in miscellaneous costs,  
7 and a 300 percent increase in warehousing costs. This is  
8 passed through to the recipient agencies, in particular,  
9 school districts in the form of increased fees for  
10 products. Because of these increases, projections indicate  
11 that agencies will pay more this year to receive the  
12 products than the value of the products themselves.

13           Four, we expect substantial increases in the  
14 upcoming months as well due to the increases in fuel costs  
15 to our shipper. The distances food travels in our state  
16 cause higher prices in that aspect as well.

17           Five, the current USDA administrative funds we  
18 receive for operating the Food Distribution Program cover  
19 only 50 percent of the costs actually attributed to our  
20 total child nutrition administrative funds. These costs  
21 are not passed on to the recipient agencies. The result is  
22 that other programs, activities and initiatives, such as  
23 nutrition education, program integrity and statewide  
24 initiatives, are underfunded in order to cover the extra  
25 costs.



1           Six, while some food service programs are  
2 self-sufficient, school districts and other program  
3 participants have contributed approximately \$2 million in  
4 subsidies to their food service programs this past year.  
5 These funds are taken out of the school and district  
6 general funds that could have gone to other education  
7 programs.

8           With these information pieces in mind, I would  
9 like to propose that the Farm Bill reauthorization include  
10 a cash-in-lieu-of-commodities provision for Wyoming and  
11 other states with similar problems. This system has worked  
12 extremely well for our child and adult care programs for  
13 nearly 15 years. At the time we changed, Wyoming was  
14 allowed to provide this system of payment due to issues of  
15 transportation and limited product availability for those  
16 organizations. We also currently have two school districts  
17 part of the Commodity Letter of Credit system that was  
18 established many years ago from previous legislation.

19           The extremely rural nature of our state has  
20 created a significant financial burden on our schools  
21 because of the high cost of receiving commodity products.  
22 The ability for food service programs to use the actual  
23 cash contribution to directly purchase products that will  
24 be quickly and readily used by them would be a significant  
25 enhancement to these programs.

1           In many instances, our schools can purchase  
2 equivalent products from commercial vendors for either the

3 same or less cost than the price we need to charge to cover  
4 our costs to provide them with government commodity foods.

5 While the cost in product value would be  
6 equivalent to what we already received, the cost to USDA of  
7 shipping products to Wyoming would also be eliminated.  
8 Quite often we have also had to coordinate with other  
9 states in order to receive our share of some products as  
10 our entitlement only gave us partial loads. The result of  
11 doing this, while a small cost saving to USDA, also limits  
12 product availability to those states unable to receive full  
13 loads of an item. In some instances, if we cannot share  
14 loads with another state, we have had to decline offerings,  
15 especially for bonus products.

16 With all these issues in mind, I would again  
17 strongly urge USDA to work with Congress to create a  
18 provision in the Farm Bill that would allow Wyoming and  
19 other small states to receive cash in lieu of commodities  
20 as an alternative funding method for food assistance to  
21 schools. While I understand and applaud the purpose behind  
22 farm subsidy programs like the Food Distribution Program in  
23 Wyoming, it has become more of a burden than a blessing.

24 I would like to thank you all for the opportunity  
25 to speak. The use of this type of information-gathering

31

1 forum has been useful in the past and I'm sure will  
2 continue to provide value in the future.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Given the time constraints,  
5 I'll go ahead and speak on behalf of Director McDaniels, the  
6 director of the Department of Family Services. My name is  
7 Terry Williams. I'm the administrator for the economic

8 assistance services in the Department of Family Services  
9 for the State of Wyoming.

10 First I'd like to thank you and congratulate you  
11 as FNS in your response to Katrina and Rita. The full food  
12 stamp benefits that you are providing are critical to the  
13 34 families and the 84 individuals that we're now serving  
14 here in the state as they begin to get their lives together  
15 again. So providing that full benefit and the extension  
16 for the additional 90 days is obviously extremely helpful  
17 to those families, and we're most pleased to work with you.

18 Second, I'd like to encourage as soon as possible  
19 that we change the name of the Food Stamp Program. This  
20 change is critical to our marketing and outreach. The name  
21 no longer reflects the service delivery. We believe that  
22 the name change would be most beneficial and helpful in  
23 terms of our being able to serve the elderly in terms of  
24 presenting it truly as the food and nutrition program that  
25 it is.

32

1 Third, I would like to -- the agency recommends  
2 that we consider the minimum benefit changing it from, say,  
3 the existing \$10 to, say, \$30. We believe that the \$10 was  
4 put in place in I believe it was the 1978 reauthorization  
5 of the Food Stamp Program, and clearly inflation in those  
6 20-plus years indicates that, you know, \$30 or at least a  
7 minimum of a dollar a day, you know, would be, again, most  
8 appropriate. And again, it would be helping us in a state  
9 that's having an increasing portion of their population  
10 being elderly that they would be able to buy food and still  
11 be able to secure medicines.

12 Fourth, we would like to see the benefits  
13 extended for families in transition to self-sufficiency.  
14 Wyoming has had success in moving families from AFDC/TANF  
15 to employment, but unfortunately, like the rest of the  
16 nation, many of these jobs, and in many instances it's two  
17 jobs, do not pay a living wage. And so for that mother,  
18 say we've managed to get her through a community college  
19 and moving her towards self-sufficiency in terms of an  
20 employable skill, we recommend that you consider extending  
21 a portion of the food stamp benefits, say, for an  
22 additional 90 days, maybe even at a 50 percent level of  
23 benefits. The tiered nutrition support then could help her  
24 get going in terms of the desired track towards  
25 independence.

33

1 But basically, that situation where, you know,  
2 all of a sudden the safety net is no longer available, if  
3 it could be that opportunity for a tiered transition, we  
4 believe that it would greatly help these families.  
5 Fifth, I would like to express the support of the  
6 comments of our TEFAP director from the Wyoming Food Bank.  
7 Wyoming's share of commodities are figured according to the  
8 following CFR: "Each state's share of commodities and  
9 funds shall be based upon 60 percent of persons in  
10 households within the state having incomes below poverty  
11 level and 40 percent of the number of unemployed persons  
12 within the state." And here Wyoming's low unemployment  
13 rate affects what we receive. This formula doesn't take  
14 into account our working poor. In a state where one out of  
15 three jobs, unfortunately, are not paying self-sufficiency  
16 or a living wage, this is a real impediment to us.

17                   So on behalf of the agency, we thank you for the  
18 opportunity to testify today.

19                   (Applause.)

20                   DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR CARTER: Excuse me.  
21 I'm sorry. Did I hear you to say that there were 34  
22 families that evacuated to Wyoming as a result of the  
23 hurricane?

24                   MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, sir. There are 34  
25 families representing 84 individuals as of, I guess,

34

1 earlier this week is the count of families that have  
2 relocated as a result of Katrina and Rita to Wyoming.

3                   DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR CARTER: Thanks.

4                   MS. FORD: I'm Tori Ford, and I'm up from  
5 Denver, Colorado representing Metro Caring, which is a  
6 nonprofit food service -- emergency food service provider  
7 to people in metro Denver. And as has been mentioned  
8 previously, our clients would like to see the minimum food  
9 stamp benefit raised from \$10. Unfortunately, we are  
10 unable to convince them of the value in those \$10, and many  
11 do not feel that the paperwork and application and  
12 regulations to get those \$10 is worth that sum.

13                   However, I do have a lot of people who greatly  
14 appreciate the food stamps they receive. I have a message  
15 from Gloria. She is a single mother of two struggling to  
16 make ends meet in Colorado. After paying \$850 in rent,  
17 picking up the ever-increasing utility bills, which again  
18 will increase this winter, and paying her other necessary  
19 bills, she wouldn't be able to put food on the table for  
20 herself and her two children without food stamps.

21 It is fortunate she doesn't have to afford  
22 lunches, too, as her children qualify for school lunches.  
23 She hopes that funding will not be lost because she cannot  
24 afford a second job and child care for her children.  
25 The people that we see for utilities assistance

35

1 are struggling to balance their budgets. Those who are  
2 receiving food stamps have a chance. Food is often a part  
3 of the budget that our clients see as expendable or  
4 discretionary. Choosing to feed their children the  
5 10-for-a-dollar ramen noodles does not provide the  
6 necessary nutrition for them, but if they are receiving  
7 food stamps and they have funding designated for that, they  
8 have a chance at making ends meet.

9 Last month Metro Caring served about a thousand  
10 households. What will these numbers look like should  
11 funding for food stamps be cut? Colorado experiencing  
12 another winter of growing utility costs will see an  
13 increasing number of people needing assistance. Rent is  
14 not going down. Wages aren't going up. The other budgets  
15 or factors of the budget aren't changing either. They are  
16 going up and the income for our clients is not.

17 So we increasingly are keeping an eye on the food  
18 stamp budget, and our clients are registering comments as  
19 well. So we hope that you will take those to heart.

20 The consequences, I saw a woman last month who is  
21 choosing not to pay her car insurance. I don't know what  
22 will happen for her and her baby if she would get in an  
23 accident. She just can't make ends meet. Rhonda,  
24 unfortunately, can't get food stamps. They are being  
25 garnered for some past overpayment and is turning to food

1 pantries across the metro area to try to patch together 30  
2 days worth of food.

3           And the trickle-down of the TEFAP problems that  
4 distributors and states are seeing affects agencies like  
5 Metro Caring who provide TEFAP to our clients. Last  
6 October Metro Caring began receiving less than half of what  
7 we were previously receiving because of the change in  
8 distribution for Denver County. While it's wonderful that  
9 more eligible families are able to receive it through the  
10 wider distribution of TEFAP, Metro Caring has less to offer  
11 the same number of people. This morning when I left  
12 Denver, we had one package of pudding to offer the first  
13 person through our door.

14           So as you consider the budget and the Farm Bill,  
15 we hope that you will preserve the services that create the  
16 food safety network so many of our low-income and no-  
17 income individuals and families need to stay afloat. And I  
18 wish you and our leadership luck as you determine the best  
19 use of our resources to feed America.

20                           (Applause.)

21           MS. PODOLAK: Good morning. My name is  
22 Tina Podolak. I'm the executive director of the Colorado  
23 Anti-Hunger Network, so we welcome you to Colorado as well  
24 as Wyoming. The Colorado Anti-Hunger Network is a private,  
25 nonprofit organization working to alleviate hunger. We

1 work with a diverse group of public, private and nonprofit  
2 organizations to address food insecurity and hunger in

3 Col orado.

4           The 2007 Farm Bill does not just affect our  
5 agricul ture. Whether you are a needy American or working  
6 mother or even a hurricane victim who now is relying on a  
7 government food program, you have a stake in this bill.

8           The Colorado Anti-Hunger Network is pleased to  
9 partner with state agencies and the USDA's Mountain  
10 Region -- the Plains Region FNS office in efforts to  
11 alleviate hunger. We want to take this opportunity to  
12 thank USDA for its fast and effective response to the needs  
13 of the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Such action  
14 has shown once again that the Food Stamp Program is  
15 fundamentally sound.

16           Working poor families are having to spend  
17 inordinate amounts of their limited incomes on health care,  
18 housing, child care expenses, rising gasoline prices and  
19 another anticipated increase in home heating fuel. I think  
20 I'm echoing what a lot of speakers have said today.

21           Feeding hungry children and families sounds  
22 simple enough. Someone is hungry, you give them food. The  
23 most direct way to reduce hunger is to improve and expand  
24 the national nutrition program so they can provide people  
25 at risk of hunger with resources they need to buy food for

38

1 an adequate diet. The Food Stamp Program serves as the  
2 first line of defense in the national battle against  
3 hunger. Food banks, private charities and local  
4 communities are not equipped to replace any lost food stamp  
5 benefits.

6           Cuts in the program would disproportionately  
7 impact the neediest individuals in our society. Government



8 has a role that charity cannot provide. Supplemental  
9 nutritional programs, which are designed to help the most  
10 vulnerable people, children, elderly and the disabled, must  
11 be enhanced.

12 I am here today to emphasize that we must  
13 continue to invest and strengthen the national nutrition  
14 safety net by ensuring that all federal food assistance  
15 programs work actively to enroll all eligible people, that  
16 food stamp benefits are based on a realistic measure of  
17 what households need to buy food for an adequate diet,  
18 allowing low-income families to participate in the Food  
19 Stamp Program without forfeiting their opportunity to save,  
20 extending eligibility to more struggling low-income people,  
21 expanding access to child nutrition programs, strengthening  
22 federal commodity programs and providing WIC programs with  
23 enough funding.

24 We also encourage continued investment in public  
25 education to increase outreach and awareness of the

39

1 importance of preventing hunger and improving nutrition for  
2 health, learning and productivity.

3 Federal feeding programs are essential in our  
4 fight to end hunger. We ask you to protect the entitlement  
5 status of the Food Stamp Program, prevent block granting of  
6 nutrition programs, increase program eligibility, and  
7 improve the adequacy of benefits.

8 Specific recommendations include, as is stated  
9 already today, raising the \$10 minimum to allow households  
10 with more than two members to qualify for full minimum  
11 benefits; fully restore single adult eligibility; adjusting

12 the error rate to allow for recognition of state-increased  
13 participation and/or set a reasonable fixed rate for states  
14 to aim toward and exclude minimum benefit households from  
15 error sampling; allow participants under the age of 22 who  
16 have children and who are living with their parents to  
17 apply separately from their parents; exclude from household  
18 income reporting all income earned by members age 18 and  
19 under if in school at least half time; base monthly  
20 benefits on an updated measure of what families really need  
21 to buy healthy foods; raise eligibility thresholds; allow  
22 State Farmers Market Associations to apply for food stamp  
23 authorization; rename the Food Stamp Program, echoed again;  
24 extend transitional food stamps from five months to six  
25 months; and increase funds for Food Stamp Program

40

1 administration. And that's a challenge for us in Colorado,  
2 as you know. Thank you very much.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. HACKETT: Good morning. My name is Jan  
5 Hackett. I am a staff forester for the Colorado State  
6 Forest Service, and thank you for letting us participate in  
7 your nutrition forum. And actually I think you'll find  
8 that we have a lot of commonalities with commodities and  
9 providing public benefits from national forest lands -- not  
10 national, we want -- we're actually looking at family  
11 forest lands.

12 More than 40 percent of our nation's forest lands  
13 are in the hands of private landowners, mostly families.  
14 Although privately owned, these family forest lands provide  
15 an array of resources to the entire public, resources we  
16 cannot live without, including clean water and fresh air.

17 However, these family-owned forests, as well as the  
18 benefits we receive from them, are at risk due to  
19 fragmentation, changes in land use and declining forest  
20 health. Strong forestry provisions in the 2007 Farm Bill  
21 are essential to keep our family forest farms intact,  
22 healthy and productive.

23 In addition to clean water and air, family forest  
24 lands provide wood products, recreation, wildlife and  
25 endangered species habitat, hunting, which, of course,

41

1 provides food, and job opportunities. It is essential that  
2 the benefits are viewed as commodities derived from forest  
3 farms similar to commodities from farms and ranches.

4 Two thirds of the nation's drinking water comes  
5 from family-owned watersheds.

6 I'm sorry. I didn't realize that we were using  
7 this one instead of this one.

8 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: We could  
9 hear you. It was just an echo. We could still hear you,  
10 though.

11 MS. HACKETT: I get that in my head  
12 sometimes, usually most of the time.

13 (Laughter.)

14 MS. HACKETT: Approximately 90 percent of  
15 endangered species depend on forests for habitat. We must  
16 put a value on these benefits and help sustain our working  
17 family forest land.

18 There are over 10 million family forest  
19 landowners. Forest landowners and their surrounding  
20 communities proactively manage trees and forests as

21 solutions to many of our nation's problems, such as water  
22 and air quality. For many of these landowners, both  
23 technical and financial assistance is critical in achieving  
24 economic and environmental sustainability. An integration  
25 of assistance programs can address a broader strategy for

42

1 family forest conservation.

2 The forestry title in the 2002 Farm Bill gave  
3 provisions that benefitted the family forest landowners and  
4 the nation's forest resources. Sustainable forestry must  
5 be a key component in this next Farm Bill as well.

6 Conservation in the Farm Bill is about conserving  
7 working rural lands, whether they are farms, ranches or  
8 forests. Thank you.

9 (Applause.)

10 MS. BERGGREN: Christy Berggren, also with  
11 the Colorado State Forest Service, and I'm a forester.  
12 Appropriations authorized under the Farm Bill have been  
13 critical in helping many family forest landowners to manage  
14 their forests over the years. Managing forests, like  
15 through forest thinning, makes them grow better, generate  
16 wood products and be more resistant to wildfires and some  
17 disease epidemics. This has been really important over the  
18 last couple of years especially in Colorado.

19 Continued support of these programs is critical  
20 to ecosystem health, clean air and clean water. It is also  
21 very important that the Farm Bill should support the forest  
22 products industry.

23 Currently, many of the products removed during  
24 forest thinning projects go to waste, and this is because  
25 there is a very large lack of forest industry in many of

1 the western states. Funding authorized by the Farm Bill  
2 could be used to support things like biomass facilities  
3 which use wood chips that come from thinning projects to  
4 provide a clean, renewable domestic source of energy.

5 I would like to ask for continued and increased  
6 support of the forestry programs under the 2007 Farm Bill.  
7 Thank you.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. RAMOS: Good morning. My name is Ray  
10 Ramos. I'm a tree farmer in Colorado. I want to thank you  
11 for giving the opportunity to participate. Can everybody  
12 hear me?

13 Jan and Christy talked to you about the Colorado  
14 State Forest Service and the Tree Farm System. I'm a  
15 member of the Tree Farm System. It's a national  
16 organization that is run by the American Forest Foundation.

17 Today I want to talk to you about two basic  
18 things. One, somebody here talked about nutrition and the  
19 poor protein availability in the food program. I can tell  
20 you that in Colorado, at least, there is quite a few  
21 families that the only protein that they get is from either  
22 fish or wildlife. An elk or a deer, wild turkeys are  
23 available in plenty, but when there is a fire, a forest  
24 fire, when there is erosion and polluting of the streams,  
25 the wildlife suffers.

1 So today I want to make sure that this part of  
2 the Tree Farm System, protecting wildlife and increasing

3 the health of the forest so that wildlife can actually live  
4 there and procreate, and that's one of the things that we  
5 take very seriously in managing our forest.

6 Another thing that I want to make sure that you  
7 understand is that in some areas, in Colorado or in some  
8 other states, forestry is not a money-making environment or  
9 there is no market for timber. There is no -- firewood is  
10 not really recognized as a real industry. So we need the  
11 support -- in order to maintain the private forest, we need  
12 support from the State and from the national government.

13 Colorado has what we call the Forest Act Program,  
14 and it does help us in the taxing of forest land at the  
15 agricultural level. So it does help.

16 Now, one of the other things that is bothering me  
17 is the cost of fuel, heating and transportation. I have  
18 looked into several of the available means of generating  
19 fuels from the forest products that are not really usable.  
20 When you thin the forest, you cut the scrub, you actually  
21 try to open up the forest, but then you have all this mass  
22 biomass that we don't have any use for. There is projects  
23 that are actually using biomass in the form of wood chips  
24 to heat buildings. There is a Chadron State College in  
25 Chadron, Nebraska, they heat their buildings with wood

45

1 chips, so it's a very viable way of heating structures.

2 Then there's other programs like converting  
3 carbohydrates in the cellulose, convert them to sugars and  
4 from there convert them to alcohol by distillation. So  
5 there is all kinds of programs that if USDA and Congress  
6 and everybody gets together and actually tried to use that  
7 particular product to enhance the fuel system, the fuel

8 availability in this country.

9           Again, those are the two things that I wanted to  
10 bring to you. I thank you. This has been a great  
11 opportunity for me. Thanks again.

12                           (Applause.)

13           MR. REEDY: Good morning. I'd like to  
14 welcome all of you coming to our state and to our turf.  
15 That's a really good thing for you hopefully and for us to  
16 learn more about us, too.

17           My name is Rom Reedy. I work for Peak Wellness  
18 Center, which is the community mental health center. It's  
19 a private, not for profit. We're supported largely by the  
20 State and then by County and a number of other things like  
21 that.

22           What I'd like to speak toward are some of our  
23 people who are almost invisible but not quite in our  
24 society. When we think of Wyoming, we think of everybody  
25 having a job, a ranch, something, but we do actually have a

46

1 fairly decent number of those who are homeless, and many of  
2 those people have what we would consider co-occurring  
3 illnesses, substance abuse, schizophrenia, bipolar,  
4 depression. There are people who oftentimes these things  
5 started early in their teenage years or late in their  
6 teenage years who never developed the skills that most  
7 everybody else develops.

8           They don't learn how to feed their families.  
9 When they are talking about -- many of them grow up in  
10 multi-generational problems, so when their teachers in high  
11 school are talking about nutrition, it's kind of like yeah,

12 right, you haven't been to my house. So maybe these people  
13 just never learn this.

14 One of the things -- I've been in my current job  
15 since May. I direct a residential treatment program for  
16 men. We have men from six months to a year. We don't just  
17 work on their addiction. We try to teach them how to live.  
18 We focus on wellness.

19 Programs like the food stamps and the food bank  
20 have been essential for us. When we go through our monthly  
21 order, what things to get from the food bank, I sit down  
22 with the guys and I talk about what's a balanced meal, what  
23 things do you want, how do you choose which things are good  
24 and then how do you find a budget for that. So we have the  
25 guys thinking about that because what's going to happen for

47

1 many of these men -- and there are also women's programs --  
2 these people have never fed their children. They have been  
3 fast food and no food for most of their lives. To finally  
4 sit down and learn that they can make a difference in their  
5 children's lives as well as their own for many of them is  
6 eye opening. And one of the very first gifts they feel  
7 they can really give their child is for once I can feed my  
8 child well rather than relying on other people to do that  
9 for me. So I think what is happening for us is just  
10 essential.

11 One of the big pieces of this, too, is we have  
12 what's called the sensible nutrition. You've heard that  
13 word earlier. That's a neat program. The person comes  
14 into our facility, talks with the people, goes through the  
15 newer food chains and boundaries and all of that stuff.  
16 We've learning pyramids and circles and, you know, we're



17 going to learn all kinds of new shapes, but these people  
18 are learning things they never really learned. They have  
19 somebody sitting there and it's doing hands on. I can buy  
20 the food from the food bank. They do the choosing of that.  
21 They can look at the budget of that. They get to do the  
22 whole preparation from beginning to end. They learn how to  
23 handle food, that you don't touch your chicken and then  
24 touch your lettuce, those types of things.

25 Those things have been -- when you watch these

48

1 guys for the first time cook a meal, it's cool. When you  
2 know that finally they are going to be able to do that for  
3 their kids, that's even better.

4 Oftentimes we think of the women and children,  
5 but the men also where I work are just as important because  
6 they want to be good fathers. For me it's fun to watch men  
7 being able to stand up and be good fathers, be able to feed  
8 their families not only in terms of buying the food but  
9 getting their elbows in there and making food.

10 I had a meeting Wednesday morning with 20 guys  
11 there, and we have graduations, and one of the nice things  
12 we can get are cakes. I can't buy cakes. They cost just  
13 too flat much money for my folk. But we can get the cake  
14 mixes. Twenty guys there. I said, "Who would like to make  
15 the cake?" No hands went up. And finally one guy went  
16 like this and says, "Quite frankly, we don't know how." We  
17 sat down with them, we worked with them on how to do that.

18 The things that are happening here for me are  
19 really the center of my program -- we call it Peak Wellness  
20 Center -- is wellness. We don't just work on the person

21 staying mentally well. We don't just work on them not  
22 drinking, we work on them having a life again and a full  
23 life where they are taking care of themselves, their  
24 children and the next generation.

25 If you watch, many of the things you find out,

49

1 that one generation got sober, let's say, 50, 60, next  
2 generation got sober at 40, next generation may get sober  
3 at 30. The things that we're doing now with these men, I  
4 think, doesn't only make a difference in their lives, it  
5 makes a difference in their children's life and their  
6 future. It's money well spent. Thank you.

7 (Applause.)

8 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: We're on a  
9 roll with the mike problems. Could be the operator. How  
10 about now? As far as the speakers that signed up to speak,  
11 we have heard from everyone that's on the list, but it is  
12 an open forum, and if something has moved you to come up  
13 and maybe make a comment or two about what was said today  
14 or the programs that are up for reauthorization, I really  
15 welcome that.

16 If you don't want to come up here to this podium,  
17 we have microphones that we can hand out within the  
18 audience if you care to raise your hand and share because I  
19 know there are other individuals here, and if you've  
20 already spoke and would like to add on to what you were  
21 saying, we still have some time available and would more  
22 than welcome to hear from you because the comments were  
23 very compelling today.

24 MR. ZIMMERMAN: You encouraged me there.

25 I'm Scott Zimmerman. I represent Rocky Mountain Farmers

1 Union, which is a general farm organization in Wyoming,  
2 Colorado and New Mexico. I had the opportunity to attend  
3 the forum that was held earlier in August at Douglas, and I  
4 specifically talked about the commodity programs that  
5 affect my membership at that time, but I would like to make  
6 some general comments, if I could.

7           You've heard from a number of agencies today that  
8 represent the consumers of the products my members produce,  
9 and we both tend to be unified under one thing, and that's  
10 we're both all within the USDA, and I would implore you  
11 very strongly to stand up for your share of the budget. We  
12 have seen a lot of numbers coming out of Washington talking  
13 about what percentage the cuts may well be.

14           It is imperative that the farm and ranch families  
15 that are being impacted by the energy prices and the low  
16 commodity prices, as well as these working families, single  
17 mothers, elderly, what have you, continue to receive the  
18 assistance that's going on now, and I would just urge you  
19 to do everything in your power to make sure your budget  
20 stays whole. Thank you.

21                           (Applause.)

22           MS. FERRELL: I'm Rhonda Ferrell, and I  
23 work for the Department of Family Services here in Wyoming.  
24 I work in Casper. Some of the things that my staff have  
25 talked about, this is not a departmental stance, is that we

1 would like to see things like the ABAWD provision changed.  
2 We think it's a little stringent having three months of

3 food stamps out of 36.

4 In addition to that, we'd like to see maybe the  
5 exemption where people do not have to work if they have a  
6 child under 6 being reduced to maybe 1. If it's important  
7 for people to work to become self-sufficient, then we  
8 should send that message.

9 In addition to that, then the employment and  
10 training program probably needs to change. Two months out  
11 of twelve for participation is not much, so what kind of a  
12 message are we sending those people?

13 I hate doing this. I'm so nervous.

14 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Don't be  
15 nervous.

16 MS. FERRELL: The other issue that we have  
17 is with people who are living together as presenting  
18 themselves to the community as husband and wife or the  
19 woman is pregnant and we're allowing separate household  
20 status food stamps, and we see a lot of that, and we think  
21 that's real error prone.

22 And again, we would like to see the \$10 limit  
23 increased to something more reasonable, you know, whether  
24 it's \$2 a day that people recommend that you need in order  
25 to pay for food to live on, we think that needs to be

52

1 changed and maybe indexed like the one woman said with the  
2 inflation rate. I think that's a good idea. Thank you.

3 REGIONAL ADMINISTRATOR BARNES: Thank you.

4 (Applause.)

5 DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY COLER: Well, thank  
6 you very much for those of you who made comments. It's  
7 great to hear when you applaud the successes, and it's also

8 very constructive when we hear the obstacles that you face  
9 in administering our programs or helping those who actually  
10 participate in the programs. I think it will only lead to  
11 improvements over time.

12 If you did not speak today, we do have a Web site  
13 for comments if you would like to submit those, and that's  
14 [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov). There is a link for the Farm Bill listening  
15 sessions that you can click onto and submit comments, and  
16 you can also send comments through the regular old mail  
17 system as well.

18 We are going to be having these forums through  
19 early November, and so we will have some time to accept  
20 comments. And then, of course, the whole process as the  
21 Farm Bill moves to Congress, there will be hearings, so  
22 there will be plenty of opportunities, but we really do  
23 appreciate your participation here today.

24 I especially appreciate the comments on Katrina  
25 and Rita and just the whole response from the Food

53

1 Nutrition Service. And USDA in general, I sit in sub-  
2 cabinet meetings where all of the different missionaries  
3 talk about what they are doing, and it's remarkable of the  
4 reach that the Department of Agriculture has. The Forest  
5 Service has been very involved in recovery, and they  
6 actually have mobile kitchens and they have helicopters  
7 that have been involved in rescuing people. The Food  
8 Nutrition Service and particularly the Food Stamp Program  
9 has been a very quick response -- I shouldn't say  
10 particularly because certainly the food banks have  
11 motivated or mobilized just extremely quick and have sent

12 people down and have diverted foods to feed people as they  
13 evacuated immediately. But we're seeing people move all  
14 across the country.

15 And it's great to hear that there's 84 people  
16 here in Wyoming who are able to access food stamps quickly  
17 under our evacuee policy. Yesterday USA Today had a map of  
18 the country and where all the evacuees are going to, and  
19 it's just remarkable how far people have been able to  
20 relocate through the help of government, through the help  
21 of the faith-based community, through the help of other  
22 organizations to really start their lives anew because some  
23 of them are not going to be able to go home. And it's just  
24 great to see that the Department of Agriculture and our  
25 partners on the state level and in community organizations

54

1 have really made a difference for these folks.

2 And again, I just want to end on thanking  
3 partnerships because these programs are designed to really  
4 rely on state government, federal government and community  
5 organizations to reach out to people.

6 We do know -- I heard a number of comments about  
7 the elderly. That's one population that is really  
8 underserved with our programs. The benefits are there for  
9 them, but drawing them into the offices to apply has been  
10 an obstacle, and that's why we have relied on technology.  
11 We have prescreeners and we're reaching out into  
12 communities where people are. We've had some pilot  
13 programs where seniors are reaching out to other seniors  
14 because that's really a trusted source for them. And it is  
15 an important benefit, and we do want them to participate.

16 Women and children are also extraordinarily

17 important populations that their lives can be impacted by  
18 these programs in a positive way, and it's all of your help  
19 that makes that happen.

20 And again, your comments are very much  
21 appreciated. They will be very useful as we look at how do  
22 we improve our programs, how do we remove obstacles, how do  
23 we make them work better.

24 So, again, I'd just like to thank you very much.  
25 Look on the Web site. These comments will be posted, and

55

1 again, if you have further thoughts as time goes on,  
2 please, please submit them. Thank you very much.

3 (Applause.)  
4 (Hearing proceedings concluded  
5 11:25 a.m., September 30, 2005.)

6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20

21  
22  
23  
24  
25

56

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2  
3  
4

5 I, LORI ARNOLD, a Registered Merit Reporter, do  
6 hereby certify that I reported by machine shorthand the  
7 foregoing proceedings contained herein, constituting a  
8 full, true and correct transcript.

9 Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 200\_.

10  
11  
12  
13

14 \_\_\_\_\_  
LORI ARNOLD  
Registered Merit Reporter

15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25